



Planning and Development Committee
March 20th, 2019

Good afternoon Chairman Cassano and Chairwoman McCarthy-Vahey. My name is Zak Leavy and I am a legislative advocate for AFSCME Council 4 which represents over 30,000 public and private employees across Connecticut.

HB 1072, An Act Concerning The Connecticut Advisory Commission On Intergovernmental Relations

We appreciate the intent of **HB 1072** which would reorganize and empower the Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations to better realize cooperation between local and state governments. However, the membership of the committee is concerning to us as it is significantly tilted toward management and municipal interests instead of including labor as a meaningful partner. The legislation only requires 1 representative from the AFL-CIO even though several different unions represent municipal employees with varying interests. As the focus is on shared services and regionalization, we believe that labor should be at the table as there may be a lack of knowledge on the committee about the different collective bargaining agreements and the representation of affected workers.

We also are concerned with the lack of labor representation as one of the duties of the commission is to look at collective bargaining agreements and other possible changes which would impact how the labor-management relationship in municipalities functions. Furthermore, we are concerned about the role of the commission to reduce long-term liabilities. While this is a worthy endeavor, we have seen many commissions use this type of language to simply reduce worker benefits and limit collective bargaining. Since this bill will impact the thousands of municipal workers across the state, we urge the committee to amend the proposal to include equal representation and include representatives from municipal bargaining units in addition to the AFL-CIO representative. We also urge the committee to include language that would respect the existing bargaining units, as well as their collective bargaining agreements, and allow for the workers to determine if they'd like to merge bargaining units and which organization they would like to have represent their interests.

SB 1082, An Act Concerning The Consolidation Of Public Safety Answering Points

We agree with the intent of SB 1082 as consolidation of public safety answering points as this will help allow municipalities to find savings in their budget. But, we want to ensure that there is language that would protect the rights of workers and their collective bargaining agreements. Labor should be a partner in consolidation efforts but any impact should be negotiated in order to ensure that consolidation is not being done purely to drive down wages and benefits for workers.

HB 7192, An Act Concerning Municipal and Regional Opportunities and Efficiencies

We agree with the intent of HB 7192 and its goal of regionalizing services and sharing costs across a broader base. However, we are concerned about the lack of labor representation on the Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations similar to our concerns with HB 1072. The commission is tasked with significant tasks related to regionalism and how municipalities interact with labor. Issues like long-term liabilities and the municipal-employee relationship should be done in conjunction with labor as a partner rather than unilaterally trying to make changes which will impact the employees collective bargaining rights. As we did in our testimony on HB 1072, we ask that the membership be increased to include at least 5 members from labor in addition to the AFL-CIO seat.

In addition, the Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, the bill creates a Commission on Shared School Services to develop a plan to redistrict or consolidate school districts. While it is a positive that labor doubled it's membership on this commission to 2 members, but that does not fully account for the different employees in a school district and their exclusive representative. School districts include many different employees which are represented by differing bargaining units and this language does not recognize that as the membership is limited to 2 labor organizations. While we agree that they should be included and support their membership, we believe that the commission should have membership that includes the interests of the various employees within a school district. This is especially important as the commission will report by 2020 on existing collective bargaining agreements as well as how future contracts are negotiated. We ask that the bill be amended to include language that would preserve the existing bargaining units, respect their individual collective bargaining agreements, and then allow for the employees to determine what labor organization they'd like to represent them rather than being told what union by management.